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SUBJECT: UNOMIG REPORT CONCLUDES RUSSIAN JET SHOT DOWN
GEORGIAN UAV

REF: A. TBILISI 675

[B](#). 07 TBILISI 674

[C](#). 07 TBILISI 2062

[1](#). Summary: On May 26, the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) released the results of its international fact finding team investigation into the April 20 downing of a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia (ref A). The report concluded that a Russian military jet, either a MIG-29 "Fulcrum" or a SU-27 "Flanker", shot down the Georgian UAV. The report underscored that third party (in this case, Russian) enforcement of the separation of forces and ceasefire regime is "fundamentally inconsistent" with the 1994 Moscow Ceasefire Agreement, and noted that the incident took place very close to an international airway when civilian aircraft were flying. The report also concluded that flights of Georgian UAVs over the zone of conflict also constituted a breach of the Moscow Agreement. The Georgian government reacted swiftly to the report, summoning the Russian Ambassador to Georgia to the Foreign Ministry on May 27 and presenting him with a list of demands including an official apology, compensation for the lost UAV, and the reinstatement of economic and military sanctions on Abkhazia (reported septel). End Summary.

The Team

[2](#). On May 26, UNOMIG released the results of its international fact finding team investigation into the April 20 downing of a Georgian UAV over Abkhazia. The team consisted of military radar specialists, fighter pilots and video and satellite imagery experts from several European countries. Neither the Abkhaz nor the Georgian side participated in the investigation, but the Georgian side cooperated fully, providing unfettered access to its video and radar data, which the report concluded to be authentic. The team based its conclusions on extensive video and radar analysis supported by eyewitness accounts from local residents and CIS peacekeepers.

The Conclusion: a Russian jet did it

[3](#). Based on the evidence presented, the report concluded that either a MiG-29 "Fulcrum" or a SU-27 "Flanker" jet shot down the Georgian UAV. According to the radar data, the jet flew south to intercept the UAV, shot it down with a short range AA-11 Archer air-to-air missile, and then proceeded north toward Krasnodar into Russian airspace. Absent compelling evidence to the contrary, the report states, "this leads to the conclusion that the aircraft belonged to the Russian air force." The report also noted that the incident took place "very close to, or even inside" an international airway at a time when civilian aircraft were flying. The report could not confirm whether the Russian jet took off from the Russian military base in Gudauta. The report underscored that the enforcement of the separation of forces and ceasefire regime by a third party, namely Russia, is

"fundamentally inconsistent" with the 1994 Moscow Ceasefire Agreement and undercuts the ceasefire regime. Georgian UAV flights over the conflict zone also constituted a breach of the Moscow Agreement, the report concluded, because such military intelligence gathering flights are "bound to be" interpreted by the Abkhaz as a precursor to military action.

Comment

¶4. Unlike previous international investigations into suspected Russian incursions over Georgian territory, including a March 2007 attack on Georgian government buildings in the Upper Kodori Gorge and an August 2007 missile incident near the Georgian village of Tsitelubani (refs B & C), the May 26 UNOMIG report explicitly names Russia as the responsible party. The Kodori and Tsitelubani investigations both provided compelling evidence of direct Russian involvement, yet their final reports did not name Russia. This is the first time the UN has actively indicated Russian involvement, perhaps because the fact finding team did not have to compromise its conclusions in response to Abkhaz or CIS PKF objections that have watered down previous reports.
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